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INTEGRATION AND THE SCHOOLS, A STATEMENT OF POLICY AND RECOMMENDATIONS. POSITION PAPER NO. 3.

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THIS POSITION PAPER REAFFIRMS THE DETERMINATION OF THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK TO ELIMINATE RACIAL SEGREGATION IN THE SCHOOLS OF THE STATE. TOWARD THIS OBJECTIVE, A SET OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE OFFERED FOR USE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL POLICIES AND PLANS. THIRTEEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTAINING INTEGRATED EDUCATION INCLUDE (1) ESTABLISHING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS THAT ARE BASED ON A CROSS-SECTION OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT'S POPULATION, (2) DEVELOPING A DISTRICT PLAN FOR RACIAL BALANCE, AND (3) EMPHASIZING THE INITIATION OF ANTI-SEGREGATION STEPS BY OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES. ALSO RECOMMENDED ARE INTERDISTRICT COOPERATION TO BE FACILITATED BY LEGISLATION AND INCREASED APPROPRIATIONS FOR SCHOOL FINANCING. IN ADDITION, TEACHING MATERIALS SHOULD REFLECT THE CULTURAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF AMERICAN LIFE, AND PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE TRAINING IN THE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF INTEGRATION SHOULD BE OFFERED FOR ALL WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH THE SCHOOLS. THE ELIMINATION OF SCHOOL SEGREGRATION IS CONSIDERED A NECESSITY IF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES ARE TO BE ACHIEVED. (NH)

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INTEGRATION

and the

SCHOOLS

A Statement of Policy
and Recommendations
by the
REGENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK

UD 006 283

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Albany
January 1968

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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FOREWORD

A fundamental responsibility of government is to establish and maintain from generation to generation the broad conditions under which the education of free men may be carried on. State government which is legally responsible for the provision of educational opportunity has a special obligation in this regard.

Equality of educational opportunity is being denied to large numbers of boys and girls — white as well as Negro and other minority group children — because of racially segregated schools. This condition must not be tolerated in a democratic society. Effective solutions must be found even if they require major changes in the established assumptions, organizations and boundaries that are a part of our present educational system.

This statement of policy by the Regents, the third of a series, is a reaffirmation of their determination to see that segregation in education is eliminated, and that the conditions under which each individual may grow in self-respect, respect for others, and in the attainment of his full potential, shall exist everywhere in the State.

I join the Regents in calling upon school board members, administrators, teachers, and all other citizens to read this statement carefully, to be guided by the principles set forth, and to support its recommendations.

James E. Allen, Jr.
Commissioner of Education

January 1968

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COMMITMENT

The elimination of racial prejudice, discrimination, and injustice is the great moral and social imperative of our time.

The most powerful and effective means of achieving this objective is education.

Convinced of the truth of these statements, and aware of the extent of *de facto* segregation in the State's school system and of the growing racial tensions in many communities, the Regents unanimously adopted, in 1960, a statement of policy which declared:

> *Modern psychological knowledge indicates that schools enrolling students largely of homogenous ethnic origin may damage the personality of minority group children. Such schools decrease their motivation and thus impair the ability to learn. Public education in such a setting is socially unrealistic, blocks the attainment of the goals of democratic education and is wasteful of manpower and talent, whether this situation occurs by law or by fact . . . .*
>
> *The State of New York has long held the principle that equal educational opportunity for all children, without regard to differences in economic, national, religious, or racial background, is a manifestation of the vitality of our American democratic society and is essential to its continuation.*
>
> *All citizens (therefore) have the responsibility to reexamine the schools within their local systems in order to determine whether they conform to this standard so clearly seen to be the right of every child.*
>
> *. . . we (also) call upon all our citizens and their agencies of government and their civic organizations to take concrete steps to provide the social climate which will make it possible for us to increase the effectiveness of education. Only with this cooperation will we be able to provide that type of democratic education which will enable all children to contribute their understanding, knowledge, and skills to increase the greatness of our State and our Nation.*

In the intervening years, the Regents have repeatedly reaffirmed this statement of policy and have supported the efforts of the Commissioner of Education and his staff in implementing it.

Now, in 1968, we not only again reaffirm our earlier policy, but reinforce our commitment with a call for more determined, more powerful, more energetic pursuit of the objectives set forth therein.

THE NEED FOR STRONGER ACTION

Current conditions of unrest, frustration, and violence show all too clearly that not only is the struggle against racial prejudice and injustice far from over, but that a perilous weakening has taken

place in the foundation of understanding and mutual respect upon which true social justice and human progress can be built.

These conditions also dramatically point up the importance of education as the strength of this foundation — education that brings children together to grow up in natural, genuine understanding, and mutual respect, that produces responsible citizenship, that fosters behavior based on moral and spiritual values, that prepares for jobs, that creates the competence and instills the confidence for managing one's own life — education that does not mirror society's ills but provides a demonstration of the practicality, the workability of the principles of democracy, thus leading the way and setting the pattern for society to follow.

Education should aim to free individuals and society from the burdens and impediments caused by ignorance and irrationality. Racism is a manifestation of such ignorance and irrationality, and is inimical to the welfare of individuals and society. The Regents and all others in positions of educational leadership cannot, therefore, be satisfied to wait for other social, business, and political forces to remedy social ills but must take the initiative in overcoming the ignorance which is at the root of those ills. If we do not, we fail in our most essential duty.

Progress made

If education is considered the most effective means of overcoming prejudice and injustice, the question then becomes how successfully is it being used.

The answer to this question is not simple, because the success of education must be measured against the increasing magnitude and complexities of the task.

In implementation of the Regents policy, the State Education Department has been active in assessing the extent of racial imbalance and the progress in correcting it, providing special consultation and assistance on integration to the school districts, preparing curriculum materials and teaching guides for use in the schools, conducting seminars and workshops for teachers, administrators, and laymen, and in securing funds to aid communities in eliminating racial segregation and in preparing for integration.

School desegregation is an accomplished fact in a number of school systems in New York State. Moving quietly, several communities have integrated their schools. Others, with perhaps more difficult situations, have carefully formulated their long-range plans and are moving with determination to implement them. In most

cases, the problem has been approached calmly and dispassionately, with the emphasis on improving the quality of education for *all* pupils.

Problem grows

Despite the determination and significant accomplishments of many in education, the growth of the problem has outstripped the efforts to deal with it:

- Racial imbalance *within* school districts is increasing in both suburban and urban communities: racial census reports show that between 1961 and 1966, in the 41 school districts with the highest percentage of Negro pupils (exclusive of New York City), the number of elementary schools with more than 50 percent Negro pupils increased from 60 to 72; the number with more than 90 percent Negro pupils increased from 25 to 33.
- Racial isolation *among* school districts is also increasing. In this same period, the percentage of Negro pupils in one suburban district rose to 82 and in another, to 71. In three other districts, the percentage surpassed 50.

Obstacles to progress

Underlying all the difficulties which have hindered progress in school desegregation is the basic question of attitude. The attitude of resistance and misunderstanding which prevails among many is a strong factor which seriously affects attempts to achieve in all aspects of society the integration essential to justice for minority groups and equality of opportunity for all.

Experience of the past 7 years has shown that this negative attitude expresses itself in such ways as the persistent assumption that the elimination of segregation is dependent upon and must wait for the elimination of discriminatory conditions in housing, employment and social customs; a persistent, but mistaken, belief that our educational obligation can be met merely by equal or superior facilities and staff in segregated schools; an unwillingness to depart from traditional concepts of school structure and organization even when they are no longer appropriate for current needs and conditions; a growing distrust of the established order and institutions of education among minority-group "moderates" arising from disillusionment over the efforts and intent of the white majority; the endorsement of separatist solutions by militant advocates of segregation — both black and white.

While the public educational authorities at all levels bear direct responsibility for leadership and action in the elimination of segre-

gation, the problem is also the responsibility of every citizen — of government officials, civic leaders, leaders of ethnic and racial groups. The existence of segregation not only creates individual and group injustice, abhorrent to all who believe in the dignity of man and the equality of opportunity implicit in a democracy, but it also poses a threat to the economic, social, and cultural health of the community, State, and Nation. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that a positive attitude shall prevail and that, both as a practical matter and as a moral obligation, prompt action be taken to correct the situation wherever it exists.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The basic precept of all educational endeavor is that equality of educational opportunity to develop the full potential of his capabilities is the right of every individual, and that it is the responsibility of the State to see that this equality of opportunity is provided for all. With this as an overriding objective, we believe the following principles should guide the development of policies and plans for eliminating racial segregation in education and for achieving an integrated school system:

1. Segregation of children on the basis of race is harmful. This fact is well stated in the 1967 report of a nationwide investigation by the United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Racial Isolation in the Public Schools* (p. 193, vol. 1):

> *The central truth which emerges from this report and from all of the Commission's investigations is simply this: Negro children suffer serious harm when their education takes place in public schools which are racially segregated, whatever the source of such segregation may be.*
>
> *Negro children who attend predominantly Negro schools do not achieve as well as other children, Negro and white. Their aspirations are more restricted than those of other children and they do not have as much confidence that they can influence their own futures. When they become adults, they are less likely to participate in the mainstream of American society, and more likely to fear, dislike, and avoid white Americans. The conclusion drawn by the U.S. Supreme Court about the impact upon children of segregation compelled by law — that it "affects their hearts and minds in ways unlikely ever to be undone" — applies to segregation not compelled by law.*
>
> *The major source of the harm which racial isolation inflicts upon Negro children is not difficult to discover. It lies in the attitudes which such segregation generates in children and the effect these attitudes have upon motivation to learn and achievement. Negro children believe that their schools are stigmatized*

and regarded as inferior by the community as a whole. Their belief is shared by their parents and by their teachers. And their belief is founded in fact. [*Emphasis supplied*]

Isolation of Negroes in the schools has a significance different from the meaning that religious or ethnic separation may have had for other minority groups because the history of Negroes in the United States has been different from the history of all other minority groups. Negroes in this country were first enslaved, later segregated by law, and now are segregated and discriminated against by a combination of governmental and private action. They do not reside today in ghettos as the result of an exercise of free choice and the attendance of their children in racially isolated schools is not an accident of fate wholly unconnected with deliberate segregation and other forms of discrimination. In the light of this history, the feelings of stigma generated in Negro children by attendance at racially isolated schools are realistic and cannot easily be overcome.

This last point was also emphasized in the report of the Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Human Relations and Community Tensions which made a study of school segregation in New York City. *(Desegregating the Public Schools of New York City, May 12, 1964):*

'Two reasons compel us to do our best to achieve well integrated schools. One is the moral imperative to assure all children true equality of opportunity. The other is the educational necessity to prepare every child to take his place in a world where no race may any longer live alone. The desegregation of the public schools..., therefore, means more than a better education for minority children. It means also a significant addition to the educative power of the schools for all children.

To argue that no classroom can be good without a white child in it is inaccurate and cruel. But, it cannot be denied that a child who has learned from experience to understand and appreciate people of races other than his own has a sounder basis for both his education and his life.

In forming their self-concepts, children are influenced by their experience of society's regard for the group with which they are identified. Thus, Negro children are likely to form lower opinions of themselves than their innate qualities warrant, and white children are likely to ascribe to themselves attributes that reflect more their favored position in our society than their own innate qualities. Only as the "rules of the game" become the same for all children can self-image be soundly formed. Children brought up in an all-white suburban community isolated from the realities of mixed racial, social, and economic situations can be disadvantaged children. Lacking experience with these very real problems they will

be ill-equipped to deal with them when they leave school to enter a world of increasing diversity.

2. Educational considerations are primary in eliminating school segregation. The elimination of racial imbalance is not to be sought as an end in itself but because it stands as a deterrent and handicap to the improvement of education for all. The corollary of the recognition of educational improvement for all children as the reason for integration is the necessity for quality in all schools everywhere. Desegregation and the prevention of further school segregation alike hinge on the creation everywhere of public schools so excellent that parents of all ethnic groups will enroll their children with confidence and pride. It is of utmost importance to find ways of correcting the deficiencies of schools not now producing the results they should.

3. The organizational and administrative arrangements of the school system exist for the purpose of facilitating the achievement of educational objectives. This is the criterion for the necessary continuing evaluation of existing arrangements in terms of their appropriateness for changing needs.

4. The "neighborhood" school offers important values, particularly in early education, but, when it becomes improperly exclusive in fact or in spirit, when it is viewed as being reserved for certain community groups, or when its effect is to create or continue a ghetto-type situation, it does not serve the purpose of democratic education, and corrective action is called for.

5. Decisions as to the particular means of eliminating racial segregation in education should, insofar as possible, be left to local action. There are many ways of dealing with the problem, and the local school officials, with their intimate knowledge of all factors of the local situation, are in a strategic position to devise solutions best suited to local needs. It is the State, however, that bears the ultimate responsibility for equalizing educational opportunities, and it is the obligation of the local school authorities to develop and implement plans in harmony with State policy. Where the solution to the problem is beyond the capability of the local school districts, or where a district fails or refuses to act, then the responsibility for corrective action is clearly and inescapably that of the State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To apply the foregoing principles, the Regents recommend:

1. The establishment of school attendance areas that make possible, wherever feasible, a student body that represents a cross-section of the population of the entire school district.

2. Action by school boards to develop and keep up to date a district plan for achieving and maintaining racially integrated schools. This plan should be developed with the assistance of a citizens' advisory committee broadly representative of the community. Appropriate and effective participation in the formation of educational policies is the right of every parent, and special effort should be made to provide opportunity for the involvement of minority-group parents in school affairs that affect their children.

3. A continuing emphasis upon racially comprehensive enrollment policies in nonpublic schools and an active effort on the part of public school authorities to bring nonpublic schools into the total community effort to eliminate racial segregation in education.

4. Initiative by school boards in seeking cooperation and assistance of other local agencies, public and private, in the development of plans and programs for integration. Although the schools bear the major responsibility for the provision of quality integrated education for all, other community agencies dealing with welfare, housing, transportation, health, and community development or planning also have vital responsibilities which are an essential part of the effort to achieve the ultimate goal.

5. The exploration by school boards of the possibilities of improving racial balance in their schools through cooperative action with neighboring districts.

6. The establishment and modification of school district boundaries so as to eliminate and avoid those which result in racial segregation.

7. The revision and simplification of legislation authorizing school district reorganization and the substantial increase of existing financial incentives for reorganization.

8. The modification of constitutional tax and debt limits on real property affecting city school districts in order to permit greater flexibility for the organization, administration, and financing of school systems which involve the city and its neighboring districts.

9. Increased State appropriations to stimulate school desegregation and to help school districts finance the additional costs incurred in carrying out programs for achieving integration.

10. An accelerated effort to have, in all our classrooms, textbooks and other teaching materials that reflect in their content and presentation the ethnic and cultural diversity of our world, and in particular, of American life. The curriculum should provide for all children an understanding of the contribution of the Negro, Puerto Rican,

and other minority groups, and the background and nature of the present struggle for justice and equality of opportunity.

11. A broader and more intensive program of workshops for school board members and administrators, sponsored by the State Education Department, designed to promote a fuller understanding of both their local and statewide responsibilities for integration.

12. The provision throughout the State of more extensive and stronger inservice programs for teachers and administrators to increase their understanding and competence in dealing with new situations and requirements of integrated schools.

13. The broadening of the programs in our colleges and universities for the training of teachers and administrators to include preparation for the special requirements of integration. This preparation should include such experiences as student teaching, internships, seminars, and workshops involving minority-group children and adults.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental in all efforts to achieve the objective of an integrated society is the principle of equality of educational opportunity. A manifestation of the vitality of our American democratic society and essential to its continuation, this basic principle, deeply embedded in education law and policy, has been continually reaffirmed in both its practical advantages and its moral justice by new developments and needs of changing times.

The Regents reaffirm their dedication to this principle and reemphasize the obligation of the entire educational system to maintain those policies and practices that will make equality of educational opportunity a reality for all our children and youth.

REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Position Papers

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